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Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Photo Requirement Exemptions

March 2017

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance



REPORT ON CLIENTS EXEMPT FROM ELECTRONIC BENEFIT TRANSFER CARD PHOTO REQUIREMENT

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION

The mission of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) is to assist and empower low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, improve their quality of life, and achieve long-term economic self-sufficiency. DTA offers a comprehensive system of programs and supports to achieve this mission, including food and nutritional assistance, cash assistance, and employment supports. DTA serves one out of every eight people in the Commonwealth including working families, children, elders, and people with disabilities.

Description of the Report

Chapter 18 Section 2 (B)(s) requires DTA to file a report detailing the reasons someone would be exempt from having a photo on their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card and the total number of exemptions that have been granted.

MGL Chapter 18 Section 2 (B) (k) – Requirement and Exemptions

In August 2013, a law was passed requiring the use of photo identification on the front of each newly issued and reissued EBT card. This requirement was extended to any cardholder over 18.¹ Exemptions were included in the law stating that any cardholder falling into one of the following categories was exempt from the Photo EBT requirement:

- 60 years of age or over
- Blind
- Disabled
- Victim of domestic violence

Any individual DTA has exempted from the Photo EBT requirement falls into one of those categories. Individuals who are exempt may still request and receive a photo on their EBT card.

DTA must comply with federal requirements, as well as this state law. To accomplish this, DTA has exempted those who meet one of the state defined exemptions, and those who state their religious beliefs prevent them from having a photo on their EBT card. DTA has also received federal guidance regarding non-applicants (see next page).

¹ Cardholders are the Heads of Household of an Assistance Unit. Each Assistance Unit only receives one EBT card.

Breakdown of Recipients with a Photo EBT Exemption, by program

As of March 1, 2017:

Photo EBT Exemption			
Exception	SNAP	TAFDC	EAEDC
Younger than 19	584	281	11
Older than 59	128,826	1,538	10,114
Domestic Violence	7,805	2,271	203
Disabled	227,196	10,996	10,283
Religious Exemption (federally defined)	0	0	0
Non-Applicant*	1,402	168	57
Total	365,813	15,254	20,668

* The United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS) has informed DTA that any Head of Household that is not included in the household benefit calculation is exempt from having a photo on an EBT card. These individuals are not clients, but are caretakers of clients unable to serve as a Head of Household.